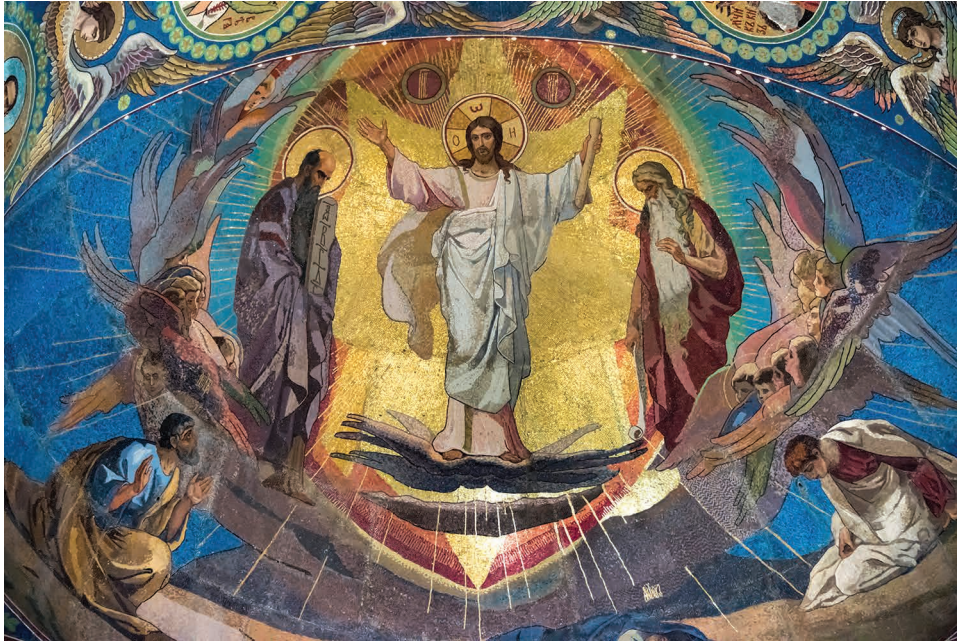


JESUS AND SALVATION HISTORY



PREPARE

Chapter Focus: After the fall of Adam and Eve, Jesus came to save us from our sin.

Scripture: “Jesus again said to them, ‘I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved. . . . I came that they may have life and have it abundantly’” (John 10:9–10).

Opening Prayer:

Jesus, we thank you for all that you have done for us—for becoming a man, teaching us, suffering and dying on the Cross because of our sin, and rising from the dead. As we begin this academic year, may we come to a greater appreciation for your many blessings and graces you give to us through the Church and the sacraments. Help us to always remain in the arms of the Church. Amen.



PROCLAIM

Proclamation: After Original Sin, we needed our Savior, Jesus Christ, to restore our friendship with God. Through the Church, we receive the graces Jesus won for us on the Cross.



EXPLORE

Our Savior Jesus Christ

Welcome to the Faith and Life Confirmation preparation course! In just a few short months, you will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is a momentous occasion because it will make you a full member of the Church and deepen your relationship with Christ.

Christians often talk about deepening their relationship with Jesus, but why is this so important? Why do we need to have a relationship with Jesus? In fact, why is it important to be members of Catholic Church? How is the Catholic Church different than any other church or religion? Do we really need Jesus and his Church to be a good person? These questions and many more will be answered as you prepare for your Confirmation, but for now, we will begin with discussing the need for Jesus Christ.

When God created the world and all that was in it, he created it good. He did not cause evil, rather evil is the result of our choices to reject God. Therefore, when God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, he created them good and in friendship with him. Because love cannot be forced, God gave Adam and Eve free will so that they could choose to love him and remain in his grace and friendship. For a while, they lived happily with God in the Garden of Eden and did not experience death, pain, or suffering. However, they eventually used their free will to reject God and his laws; this is called Original Sin. Because of their sin, they lost their friendship with God, experienced suffering and death, and continued to make choices that rejected God and harmed others. The consequences of this Original Sin not only impacted Adam and Eve, but all their descendants to this day—even us!

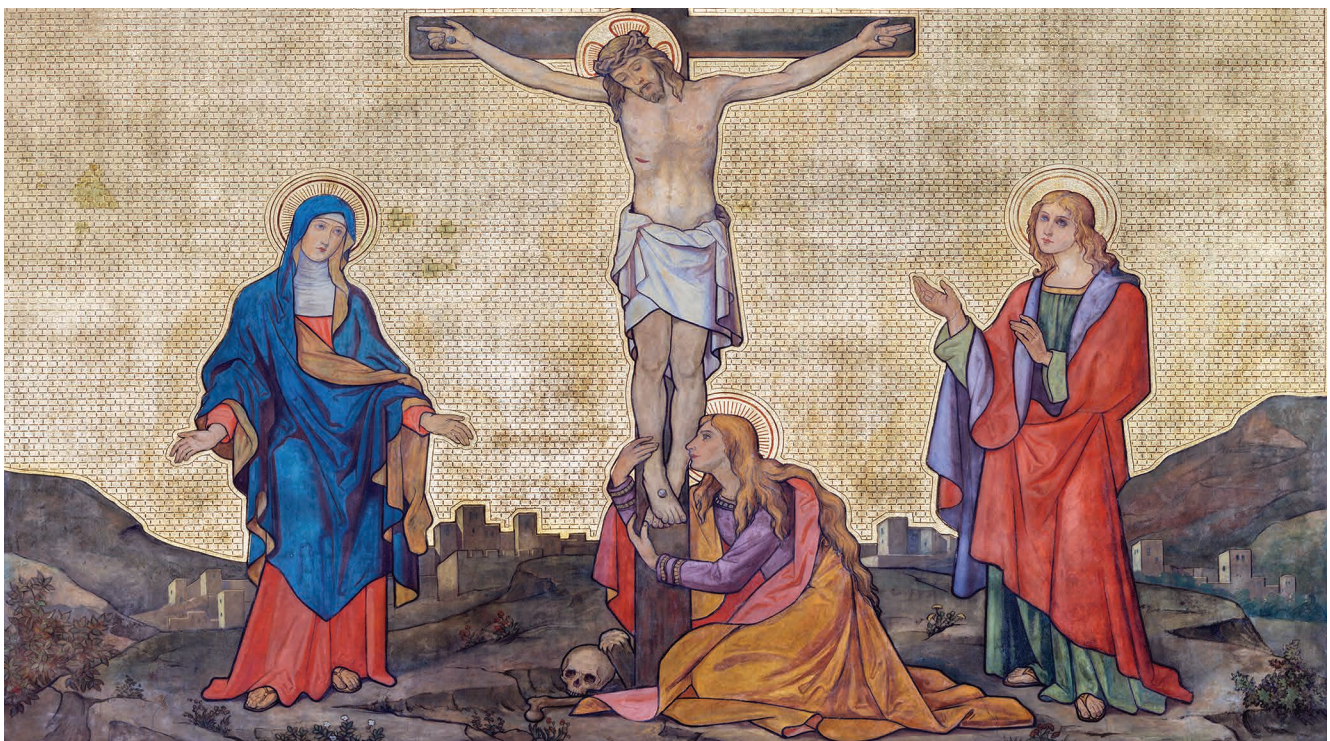


Yet even after we had sinned and rejected God's laws and his love, God did not abandon us. Right after Adam and Eve committed the first sin, God promised he would send a Savior to their descendants. For thousands of years, God prepared a specific group of people, namely his Chosen People also called the Israelites, for the promised Savior. The Israelites, who are called the Jews today, thought that the Savior would be a strong military leader who would help them conquer their enemies. Yet Jesus did not come to free the Jews from their physical oppressors, but to free them from their sin and bring them back into relationship with God. In fact, Jesus offers this salvation not only to the Jews, but to *all* people.

No animal, mere human, or angel could be our Savior since the magnitude of our sins are so great. Sometimes, when a person injures another, he can make up for by offering a fitting sacrifice. For example, if a young man breaks the neighbor's window by carelessly playing baseball in the yard, he can make up for his fault by sacrificing some of his own money to pay for the damage. However, the injury caused by our sin was not limited like breaking a neighbor's window, but it was infinite because through our sin, we offend the ever loving, perfect, and infinite God.

So, to heal this wound between us and God, a perfect and infinite sacrifice was needed—a sacrifice that God alone could offer. Yet it was not God, but human beings who sinned, and so the sacrifice had to be made by a human being. Therefore, out of his superabundant love, Jesus became man to offer the perfect sacrifice. Jesus, as true man, could make the sacrifice on behalf of all mankind, and, as true God, he could offer a sacrifice worthy enough to heal the separation between God and man. This infinite sacrifice offered by Jesus was his own life. He took our place and died on the Cross so that we could be forgiven of our sins.

Jesus is at the center of the history of our salvation because it is only through him and his sacrifice on the Cross that we can be washed free from our sin, receive God's grace, and enter into communion with God. And it is for these same reasons that Jesus also should be at the center of our lives. The closer we are to Jesus and the more we have a friendship and relationship with him, the more we are transformed by his grace. Those who are truly happy and holy are closest to Christ because happiness and joy does not come from wealth, power, or fame. It comes from being in relationship with God and living with the steady confidence that God is with us and loves us. Only when we put God first and develop a relationship with him in prayer can we find the peace and joy that our heart yearns for.



Yet if Christ is the center of salvation history and our lives, then why do we need the Church?

Indeed, many people today think that the Church is unnecessary or even inhibits our relationship with God. Yet Christ himself gave us the Church so that we could be *closer* to him. It is through the sacraments instituted by Jesus and administered by the Church he founded that we receive forgiveness of sins and Jesus' Body and Blood in the Eucharist. The graces won by Christ on the Cross are faithfully dispensed by his Church—the one, true Catholic Church. It is this Church into which you are entering into full communion with at your Confirmation, and it is through this sacrament that you will be more closely united to Jesus through a greater outpouring of graces.



APPLY



Live your Faith:

In this chapter, we saw the importance of developing a relationship with Christ. There are many different things we can do to deepen this friendship—go to Mass, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, serve the poor, make sacrifices, and so on. However, we cannot have a relationship with Jesus if we do not spend time listening to him in prayer.

This week, spend an extra 10 minutes each day in silent prayer with Jesus. You can tell him what is on your heart, but make sure to leave time for him to speak to you. If you struggle to focus your attention, try praying with the Psalms in your Bible.



CELEBRATE

We Pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.